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SUBJECT: KANDAHAR PROVINCIAL COUNCIL NOT REPRESENTATIVE

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Governor of Kandahar and local NGOs told the Ambassador that the newly elected Provincial Council is not representative of the province's population and is being circumvented by use of the shura system. They believe the shuras currently are a better means to identify and address the needs of the people. Neither option provides a perfect solution, but Afghans will need to support, encourage, and work through the PCs in order to create a more democratic and stable society. END SUMMARY.

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Unrepresentative Councils  
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12. (SBU) Ambassador Neumann met separately with Governor Assadullah and the leaders of local NGOs on November 15. The governor was concerned that the Provincial Council is more representative of Kandahar City than of the outlying areas, citing that half of the council live in the city. The current representatives are bound by their tribal allegiances that leave many unrepresented. Local NGOs said that the Provincial Council is not able to discern the needs of the people. Instead both the governor and NGOs have turned to local shuras.

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Shuras  
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13. (U) Gov. Assadullah told the Ambassador he had created his own informal council of shuras, Afghanistan's traditional means of representation. He regularly calls meetings with the shuras in order to determine the needs of each area. In his most recent meeting, the governor was presented with lists of up to 100 projects per district; he asked the shuras to choose their top three needs. The governor stated that he intends to try and complete the top three projects for each area to help the people see positive change by giving them a greater voice.

14. (U) NGOs also favor the shuras to connect to the people. They potentially provide a greater representation and also allow for local oversight of NGO operations. In particular, NGOs stated that the shuras fill the need for better representation in hard to reach regions.

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Comment  
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15. (SBU) In Kandahar, the election of a Provincial Council does not appear to have created a representative group capable of unbiased advice to the governor or making priority decisions for the province. This is no particular surprise, considering they were elected only two months ago and have little binding legal power. In order to make this body more effective and widely accepted, additional work will be needed to bridge the divide with the governor and teach the council constituent outreach beyond tribal networks. The PRT can play a helpful role in these efforts. Until then the parallel use of traditional shuras will likely continue.

16. (SBU) The highly perceptive Minister of Reconstruction and Rural Affairs agreed with the perception from Kandahar that the Provincial Councils are very imperfect representatives of provincial priorities. He suggested that since district elections are unlikely, groups of shuras might send representatives to work with Provincial Councils. What all these views add up to is that we have to think hard about an automatic assumption that Provincial Councils equal full provincial

representation. END COMMENT.  
NEUMANN